



Tips on New Caged Birds



PETVET clinics are well-equipped, full-service, small animal veterinary practices providing comprehensive diagnostic, medical, surgical and dental care. We aim to offer quality service, giving your pet the maximum opportunity to lead a long and happy life.

ALL THE CARE YOUR PET NEEDS!



Housing Tips

Just got a new cage bird? Or thinking of getting one or several? Research suggests that many parrots may have the emotional development and intellect equivalent to a two year old child. Parrots such as the Galah, Cockatoo or Eclectus are highly social animals, usually living and interacting with large numbers of their flock. As a result, individual parrots find it very stressful confined in isolation for long hours while their 'flock members' (in this case you) are away from home.

If your new parrot will spend long hours at home alone we recommend that you consider also getting it a mate. Individual parrots kept in isolation easily become bored, misunderstood, lack opportunities for adequate exercise and behavioral problems such feather plucking or self mutilation easily develop. A single parrot may be ok if you are able to spend lots of time training and interacting with it, but remember that some of the larger parrots will live for more than 30 years.

Training Tips

Budgies and Cockatiels are popular because they are relatively easily cared for (and inexpensive to purchase) but their potential as pets is often underestimated. A well cared-for budgie can live well into its teens and several of our clients own Cockatiels approaching 30 years old. Budgies can be very good talkers – some have learned up to 300 words or phrases. Be careful what you teach your parrot though. Do you really want to listen to that rude word over and over for the next 30 years?

It is important to provide a safe and stimulating environment for your pet bird. In the wild they interact with and learn from other members of their flock. We recommend that you provide a wide range of safe toys for climbing on, shredding and manipulating to stimulate the birds' natural foraging behaviour and problem solving abilities. Because they will spend a lot of time in a relatively confined space, cage hygiene is very important. Cages will need to be cleaned regularly and it is important to plan the layout so that the risk of contamination of drinking water and food by faecal matter is reduced.

Feeding Tips

Caged birds need a balanced diet. High fat seed based diets can lead to obesity and liver disease. You should offer a staple diet of a good quality complete formulated diet such as Harrison's (sold at PETVET clinics) supplemented by a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables. Avocado is highly toxic to birds and should never be fed. Seed mix should be limited to a small proportion of your birds' overall diet. Hiding some food around the cage can provide added stimulation as the bird spends time looking for it.

There are some things we recommend you don't do. Grit for parrots is unnecessary – it can interfere with the absorption of essential nutrients and medication. Some birds swallow too much grit leading to ulceration or impaction of the stomach. Sand paper wrapped around smooth wooden perches can lead to arthritis and corns. Perches should be 'natural timber' and vary in size so that the feet get some exercise.

Introducing a New Parrot

After you acquire a new bird, we suggest that you make an appointment with Christine. She will give it a thorough check-up and provide recommendations on diet, caging and management that can help you avoid the development of bad habits. And don't forget, if you already have other birds at home, it is a good idea to keep the newcomer isolated from them in a separate room for at least 30 days – you don't want the newcomer introducing any diseases it may be carrying to your existing flock.

There are now some very good resources available for bird owners and aspiring bird owners. Christine recommends books such as "Birds for Dummies" to help you choose the right bird (or decide if you should even own a bird) and how to look after it. With correct housing, diet and training most caged birds can make delightful pets. By following these tips we hope that you can avoid some of the problems we see with caged birds.

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